

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A digital information storage system connected with a network, digital information delivered through the network responsively to instructions originated from a user device handled by a user being stored in the storage system and the number of duplicate times assigned to each piece of the digital information being limited, the system comprising:

a storage for storing therein the delivered digital information; and

a host-function device for performing host function including management of a duplicate condition of the stored digital information and control of input/output actions for the digital information stored in the storage in response to further instructions sent through the network from the user device.

2. The system according to claim 1, wherein the host-function device includes receiving a request for outputting a designated piece of the digital information, determining, on the basis of the duplicate condition of the designated piece of the digital information, whether or not the designated piece of the digital information is allowed to be outputted, and delivering the designated piece of the digital information to the user device through the network only when the determination has been made such that the designated piece of the digital information is allowed to be outputted.

3. The system according to claim 1, wherein the storage is provided so as to correspond to authentication information owned by each user who utilizes each user device.

4. A digital information delivery system connected with a network to deliver digital information responsively to a request from a user device, the number of duplicate times assigned to

the digital information being limited, the system comprising:

a database for storing therein the digital information to be delivered to a user who utilizes the user device;

5 a storage for storing therein a piece of the digital information requested from the user device through the network; and

10 a host-function device for performing a host function including management of a duplicate condition of the stored digital information and control of input/output actions for the digital information stored in the storage in response to further instructions sent through the network from the user device.

5. The system according to claim 4, wherein the host-function device includes receiving a request for outputting a designated  
15 piece of the digital information, determining, on the basis of the duplicate condition of the designated piece of the digital information, whether or not the designated piece of the digital information is allowed to be outputted, and delivering the designated piece of the digital information to the user device  
20 through the network only when the determination has been made such that the designated piece of the digital information is allowed to be outputted.

6. The system according to claim 4, wherein the storage is  
25 provided so as to correspond to authentication information owned by each user who utilizes each user device.

7. A digital information delivery system connected with a network to deliver digital information responsively to a request  
30 given from a user device, the number of duplicate times assigned to the digital information being limited, the system comprising:

a database for storing therein the digital information to be delivered to a user who utilizes the user device;

a storage for storing therein both identification information and duplicate management information in relation to a piece of the digital information requested from the user device through the network; and

5 a host-function device for performing a host function of controlling delivery of the requested piece of the digital information from the database on the basis of both the identification information and the duplicate management information stored in the storage.

10 8. The system according to claim 7, wherein the host-function device includes determining, on the basis of the duplicate management information corresponding to the requested piece of the digital information, responsively to a request from the user device, whether or not the requested piece of the digital information is allowed to be delivered, and delivering the requested piece of the digital information from the database to the user device through the network only when the determination has been made such that the requested piece of the digital information is allowed to be delivered.

15 9. The system according to claim 7, wherein the storage is provided so as to correspond to authentication information owned by each user who utilizes each user device.

25 10. A digital information storage system connected with a network, information in relation to digital information delivered from a delivery server through the network being stored in the storage system and the number of duplicate times assigned to the digital information being limited, the system comprising:

30 a storage for storing therein both authentication information and duplicate management information in relation to a piece of digital information requested from the user device

through the network; and

- 5 a host-function device for performing a host function of commanding the delivery server to deliver the requested piece of the digital information to the user device on the basis of instructions originating from the user device handled by a user through the network and the duplicate management information corresponding to the requested piece of the digital information.

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